Tea Infuser Types

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Tea infusers, in summary: A UK guide to tea infusers: basket infusers best, mesh balls worst, no-infuser works too. Leaf expansion matters; size > price for quality brewing.

Infuser choice matters more than people think, and the answer is simple. This sits in the kit cluster beside travel tea infuser.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

The core principle

Leaves need room to expand and circulate; the more room, the better the extraction, see loose leaf tea.

Basket infusers (best)

A large, fine basket that sits in the cup or pot gives leaves space; the default recommendation.

Mesh balls and clips (worst)

Small tea balls and squeeze tongs cramp the leaf, under extracting and wasting good tea.

Built in pot infusers

Pots with a generous removable basket combine room to expand with easy removal; very practical.

Paper filter bags

Empty fillable paper bags are a fine cheap compromise, more room than a ball, less than a basket.

The no infuser option

Grandpa style (leaves loose in the cup) actually beats a cramped ball for many teas, see grandpa style.

Quick take

Use a large basket infuser or loose leaf with room; avoid tiny balls and squeezers, they waste good tea, see travel tea infuser.

The essentials: tea infuser types

Type	Answer
Core principle	Leaves need room to expand; small infusers restrict; impacts brewing quality
Basket infusers	BEST option; large mesh basket fits cup top; leaves expand freely; easy
Mesh ball/clip	WORST option; too small for proper expansion; leaves cramped; poor extraction
Built-in pot infusers	Generally good; integrated with teapot; large enough usually
Paper filter bags	Acceptable; loose mesh allows expansion; disposable convenience
No infuser ("free leaf")	Excellent option; leaves loose in pot; strain when pouring
Specialty Yixing/gaiwan	For dedicated tea drinkers; substantial leaf room
Price range	£3-15 typical; quality matters less than size; replace cheap quickly
Quality features	Large size, fine mesh (no leaf bits through), stainless steel, easy clean
Avoid	Tiny mesh balls; plastic cheaply made; bamboo (mould-prone)
For tea bags	Not relevant; tea bags ARE the infuser
Framing	Basket infuser or no-infuser approach best; tiny mesh balls genuinely worse

Reference noted

- PubMed: Tannins and non-haem iron absorption

FROM THE CURATOR

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More from the tea wiki

For related equipment context see the variable-temperature kettle, the teapot materials, the cast iron teapot, the glass teapot, and the travel tea infuser. For water context see the water for tea and the do you need a water filter. For brewing context see the how to brew tea, the loose leaf vs bags, and the gongfu brewing. For Chinese tea see the gaiwan brewing and the Yixing teapot seasoning.

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